

INTERNATIONAL SECURITY / MIDDLE EAST UPDATE
January 9 - 17, 2013

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1. [Panetta Discusses Service with U.S. Troops in Italy](#) (01-17-2013)

By Karen Parrish
American Forces Press Service

U.S. ARMY GARRISON VICENZA, Italy, Jan. 17, 2013 – Defense Secretary Leon E. Panetta, on a tour of Europe to talk with leaders in key allied nations, stopped here today to speak to U.S. troops about service.

Dressed in jeans and a 101st Airborne Division windbreaker rather than his usual suit, the secretary spoke to some 150 newly returned soldiers of U.S. Army Europe's 173rd Airborne Brigade Combat Team, which is based here. The 173rd is in the process of coming back from its fifth deployment since 9/11, with the unit's most recent mission taking it to Afghanistan's Wardak and Logar provinces.

The unit has had 84 soldiers killed in action since 9/11, including 13 who died on the current deployment. Army Staff Sgt. Salvatore Giunta, who received the Medal of Honor in November 2010, was serving with the 173rd in Afghanistan when he fought the 2007 battle that earned him the nation's highest military honor.

"You've paid a high price, but you've served well," Panetta told the troops. "You've served with distinction. I want to thank you for your service."

The secretary said the proudest thing he does as the leader of the world's strongest military is "to serve and to lead the men and women in uniform who put their lives on the line every day for our country."

The young people who have come forward to serve, fight, and sometimes die for the United States of America demonstrate a dedication that, Panetta said, is “what our democracy is all about.”

As defense secretary, Panetta said, his primary mission is to keep America safe.

“I can’t do that job -- nobody can do that job -- without men and women who are willing to dedicate themselves to service,” he said.

Americans at home are “safe in their homes ... because of those who are willing to go off to far places, and fight an enemy that has made clear they will not hesitate to attack our country, and to attack innocent men and women -- and children.”

Military and intelligence operations over the past decade-plus, Panetta said, have denied that enemy the kind of command and control they need to mount the sort of attack that rocked the world on Sept. 11, 2001.

The security transition in Afghanistan is on pace, the secretary said, with the Afghan army “becoming much better, operationally.” He acknowledged the Taliban are still resilient, and enemy fighters still plant explosive devices and mount other attacks.

“But ... we’re on the right track,” he added. “By the end of 2014, we will have drawn down.”

The nation’s service members can take great pride, he said, “in the fact that since 9/11, we have taken the battle to the enemy, and we have taken on the mission ... of ensuring nobody attacks the United States of America and gets away with it.”

Panetta, who has announced he will retire when the Senate confirms the next secretary, told the troops the time has come for him to be able to go home.

“I hope that when all of you go home, that you’ll have the same deep sense of pride that I have in the service that we’ve provided to this country,” he said.

Public service doesn’t pay a lot, the secretary acknowledged. “But we can have a sense that we have maintained our integrity, and that we have given something back to this country that has given us so much,” he added.

The secretary also spoke to the troops about the fiscal crisis facing the nation, citing an urgent need for responsible action from Congress. The nation’s elected leaders, he said, must “suck it up and take on some of the risks ... and challenges that are required.”

Soldiers face the worst risk of all, he noted, which is that somebody may shoot at them.

“It’s a hell of a risk,” he said. “All we’re asking of our elected leaders to do is to take a small part of the risk they’ll tick off some constituents,” he said. “The fact is, they would be doing what is right.”

Panetta, who has spent the past half century in public service, said the greatest satisfaction in such a career is the ability to help others.

“If I can stare my fellow citizens in the face and say, ‘As secretary of defense, I was able to keep you safer, and keep your families safe,’ that’s the greatest satisfaction of all,” he said. “I’m able to do that because of you.”

Biographies:
[Leon E. Panetta](#)

Related Sites:
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2. State's Sonenshine on Public Diplomacy in Middle East (01-16-2013)

*Remarks by Tara Sonenshine, Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs
Washington Institute for Near East Policy*

Public Diplomacy in a Changing Middle East

Thank you, Rob, and my thanks to the Washington Institute for Near East Policy – and the organizers of today's Policy Forum Luncheon series for inviting me today.

I am delighted to speak about our public diplomacy in a region so critically important for the American people. In our hyper-connected world, the world has become a geospatial pinball machine, ringing and pinging with security, economic and cultural connections and implications for all of us; and that ball never stops coming around. So it is very much in our interests to engage fully, energetically, and creatively. There is no more urgent region for such U.S. engagement than the Middle East and North Africa.

The reason is simple. American engagement in the Middle East is good for America and for the region. A more stable, more democratic, and more prosperous Middle East and North Africa region enhances security and prosperity for all. It means greater economic opportunity for young people, for entrepreneurs, for the business community, for educators. And it opens opportunities to deepen personal connections and strategic alliances with all countries in the region.

I would encourage you to revisit the national security directives of both President Obama and President Bush. They both understand and recognize this.

So how do we engage fully and, more importantly, how do we maximize our chances of success, so that the American people and the people of the region benefit from the current changes sweeping the Middle East and North Africa?

Two words: Public diplomacy.

These two words may sound simple. But they define a critical strategic tool in the full-on campaign of American international engagement –

Public diplomacy has a great many, mutually reinforcing elements. It includes conveying and explaining U.S. policies and values; fostering democratic transition; supporting entrepreneurship and U.S. exports; facilitating educational exchange; and promoting U.S. higher education.

It also fulfills a principle of Secretary Clinton's QDDR – or Quadrennial Diplomatic and Development Review – which underscores the critical importance of reaching out to nongovernmental, and nontraditional audiences.

Today, I'd like to talk about how we employ this deep and complex engagement – which we call American public diplomacy – in such a complicated, fast-moving and volatile region, and why we must redouble our efforts, despite the challenges we face.

First, let me provide some perspective. It was only two years ago, in Doha, that Secretary Clinton warned that the region's foundations were – quote – sinking in the sand. Since then, in countries throughout the region, we've seen demonstrators take to the streets, and the Internet.

We've seen long-standing dictatorships topple, free-fought elections and other aspects of democratic transition and – tragically – a bloody conflict in Syria with a regime attacking its own citizens.

This human narrative – which quickly came to be known as “The Arab Spring” – is still evolving. And the speed with which it unfolded – and continues to unfold – should not distract us from appreciating the deliberative pace that democratic progress demands.

As Americans, we are well aware of our own history. We know that revolution can bring an end to power but sustainable change doesn't happen overnight. The development, ratification, and the continuing evolution of our own Constitution have taken 237 years. So we should look at the region with a sober sense of history, a generous portion of humility, and a patient appreciation for the growing pains of democracy.

Our public diplomacy recognizes these dynamics, and the challenges they embody. We work to do what we always do: contextualize our foreign policies by engaging with foreign publics. We know that, in this region, positive and sustainable change comes from the concerted hard work of citizens, political leaders, NGO's and other partners who are dedicated to pluralistic and inclusive societies.

We also know we cannot let the challenges stop us from moving forward, one diplomatic overture, one multilateral agreement, one program, one exchange, one partnership, and one trade or investment at a time.

That patient understanding of progress is why we need to calibrate our public diplomacy with three distinct settings: the short term, the midterm and the long term. All three are necessary and mutually reinforcing. You can't have one without the other. To illustrate what I mean, I'd like to revisit an episode familiar to all of us.

I am talking about a cheaply made, hateful video that languished unnoticed on the Internet, then emerged to trigger outrage and violence. Thanks to the nature of our hyper-connected world (remember that pinball machine I was talking about?) it turned viral in many parts of the world – especially Muslim majority countries. Demonstrators in some of those countries targeted our diplomatic missions – even though we had no connection to the filmmaker, or the film.

Led by Secretary of State Clinton, our diplomats went out immediately to provide an American response to the film and the violence it provoked.

Short term warning, short term response.

Our people fanned out across the region, engaging media, officials and key influencers to convey that there was no U.S. Government involvement in the video – and to underscore the importance of freedom of expression.

We emphasized that we did not condone the content of that message. In fact we despised it. But we defended that filmmaker's right to make his opinion known.

This was underscored by President Obama's speech before the United Nations, in which he said – quote: “The strongest weapon against hateful speech is not repression, it is more speech.”

Our engagement in the short term emphasized a key value of the United States – freedom of speech and expression – which is also central to our mid and long term public diplomacy efforts.

We also used social media – a major 21st century tool in our public diplomacy toolbox – to ensure our message was disseminated quickly and widely. Using Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, web chats and other media, we confronted the anger head-on.

One web chat connected State Department officials in Washington with hundreds of youth from every country in the region – giving us a chance to dispel widespread myths and misconceptions about American intolerance. We were also able to project an image of the real America – as a tolerant, multi-ethnic, multi-religious society.

It was a difficult time to make so nuanced a message. But we continued to make our points, virtually and face to face. One such example was in the International Visitor Leadership Program. Our flagship exchange program invites journalists, doctors, gender rights advocates, artists, engineers, urban planners, and others to the U.S. to build valuable professional skills – and also to help them network with American counterparts. As they do that, the participants gain a better, more nuanced and accurate understanding of American society, culture, and values.

One of our many visiting groups, representing the region, recently visited the State Department on a journalism exchange. And a journalist asked us: “Why would you allow someone to defame your religion, or any religion? Why is the right to insult people an American value?”

We answered that insulting people is not an American value. And once again, the President’s point was reiterated: The best way to combat hate speech is with more speech, not less.

This was a tough lesson for the journalist – and anyone who believes that governments should enforce their own ideas of what speech is appropriate. But we will not – and should never – retreat from supporting and defending this right at home and abroad. As we continue to engage the populations of the Middle East, we must always clarify our values and principles, so we can work towards greater understanding for all.

Of course, the most desirable way to minimize how often we have to put out fires, and correct misunderstandings, is to open doors of trust and avenues of prosperity before they occur.

That is why our public diplomacy is focused on young people. They were a critical force behind the Arab Spring. And they are the region’s future change agents. They are the emerging leaders and innovators who can lead their countries and economies to greater productivity and global understanding.

It is also true that they are vulnerable to violent extremist ideologues who use false messages to recruit them into terrorism.

So though our Center for Strategic Counterterrorism Communication – or CSCC – we have developed a credible, multifaceted approach to sow doubt about extremist worldview among those being targeted by terrorist recruiters.

From digital engagement in Arabic, Somali, and Urdu – which includes aggressive use of online videos – to creative strategies that reach audiences on the ground in their home countries, we are contesting the communications space used by al-Qa’ida and its supporters.

By making the case against them with the simple weapons of truth and fact, coupled with the skills of modern communicators, we are working to counter falsehoods and influence more reasonable minds. And the fact that al-Qa'ida and its affiliates are warning their followers not to pay attention to CSCC's messaging is a backhanded badge of honor.

It's also imperative that we offer alternative futures of educational and economic opportunity. One of the most effective ways that we can do that is through the teaching of English. It is the language of finance, science, diplomacy, banking, and international law. It also enables young people to study in the U.S. and access the training that will maximize their potential for more prosperous futures.

One example in the region is our English Access Micro-scholarship Program, which was initiated in Morocco in 2003, with 17 students. We were targeting nonelite students from 13 to 20 year olds in the Middle East and North Africa.

Since then, its growth has been spectacular.

Now the program reaches 18,000 students, with more than 80,000 alumni in 85 countries throughout the world. And our public diplomacy officers in the field have expanded this kind of English language outreach to journalists, educators, entrepreneurs, religious leaders, and other key influencers across the region.

Providing opportunities for budding entrepreneurs in the region is also important. Through our TechWomen program, for example, we brought Saudi women to Silicon Valley where they engaged directly with some of our most successful entrepreneurs. Think of the messages about gender equality and business opportunity that program sends to those women.

In partnership with Coca-Cola and Indiana University, we have developed a one-month entrepreneurship education program that brought 100 Middle East and North African young leaders to the U.S. last summer. We harnessed the assets and global reach of an American corporation, and connected the college, business and local community in Indiana with emerging leaders from MENA. And those leaders returned to their countries newly empowered to become our potential business or trading partners.

Of course, it's important that our public diplomacy works to benefit people of all ages and in all different sectors. Supporting civil society is central to that. Since the beginning of the Arab Spring, we have supported the fast growing numbers of civil society practitioners in transitioning countries. We do that primarily through our U.S. Middle East Partnership Initiative – or MEPI.

In Egypt, for example, MEPI has supported training for more than 1,500 NGO staff members and activists through 50 workshops on using social media to develop advocacy and public outreach. MEPI has also partnered with Microsoft to provide free wireless Internet access and training to Libyans in rural and marginalized communities.

We know that Internet access is central to public diplomacy, whether we are using Twitter to express condolences for lives lost in a terrorist attack, or Facebook postings to raise awareness of study opportunities in the United States, or engage people in the topics that matter to us – such as climate change, democracy, and women's rights.

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We are reaching people. Our Embassy in Cairo, for example, has more than half a million Facebook fans. It's important to open these conversations, in a country experiencing a challenging transition toward democracy, and constantly shifting views about the United States.

Social media is especially useful when we have no physical presence. In Iran, we just marked the one year anniversary of our Virtual Embassy Tehran website and our Farsi-language social media platforms which include Facebook, Google-plus, Twitter, and a YouTube channel.

These forums highlight our commitment to educational opportunity, freedom of expression, defense of civil liberties, and a voice for the Iranian people. By doing this, we can counter negative regime portrayals of U.S. policy, and create debate and discussion inside Iran to isolate extremists and hardliners, and sow the seeds for democratic change.

Of course, Syria is very much on everyone's minds, as more and more people are suffering at the hands of the Assad regime. To continue our direct connections with the Syrian people, social media has been an effective tool for us. Our U.S. Ambassador to Syria regularly engages with Syrians through our website and Facebook pages, and in face to face meetings with Syrians currently outside the country.

We have 15,000 visitors a month to our embassy website and 11,000 followers on Facebook. That's where we provide information about our assistance efforts to Syria, which are considerable, and where President Obama and Secretary Clinton can send direct messages to the Syrian people.

We are proud that a consortium of U.S. colleges and universities is working to create scholarships for Syrian students who are no longer able to complete their degree within Syria. And we look forward to restarting all of our educational, cultural, and professional exchanges with the transitional authority after the fall of the regime.

As the situation in Syria and other countries make clear, security is a deep concern for many embassies in the region. So we are always assessing and reassessing the balance between our need to engage with the safety of our diplomats. But we consider full engagement – not only through social media but face to face – to be essential to our national interests.

That's what public diplomacy is all about. No matter what the challenges, we can and must continue to engage.

We can and must continue working to be more skillful in our communications, more nimble in our advocacy of U.S. policy, so that we can be even stronger defenders of our own American values and ideals. And so that the work we do contributes to greater safety, security, and prosperity at home and abroad.

I thank you for listening and I look forward to your questions.

3. In Europe Remarks, Panetta Stresses NATO Commitment (01-15-2013)

By Karen Parrish
American Forces Press Service

MADRID, Jan. 15, 2013 – NATO is an alliance that must remain strong and capable to meet 21st century challenges, Defense Secretary Leon E. Panetta emphasized in two European capitals today.

In a joint news conference here with Spanish Defense Minister Pedro Morenes Eulate, and in an earlier event today with Portuguese Defense Minister Jose Pedro Aguiar-Branco, the secretary praised NATO allies' resolve over the past 10-plus years of war, and urged their continued commitment to the transatlantic alliance.

Speaking here, Panetta said Spain is a longtime trusted ally, friend and security partner to the United States. Spain's leadership in NATO, contributions in Afghanistan and efforts to promote security in the Mediterranean basin, he said, have been critically important over the last decade.

"I believe continued Spanish leadership will be essential to the future success of the transatlantic alliance," Panetta said. "Spain is extremely important to our ability to maintain and strengthen that very important alliance."

The secretary also paid tribute to the Spanish service members killed in Afghanistan. "On behalf of my country," he said, "I want to extend to the people of Spain our deepest condolences on the fact that you buried today, as I understand it, the 100th casualty ... killed in action that Spain has endured in that conflict. You've paid a high price."

Because of many such sacrifices on the part of nations with forces in Afghanistan and of the Afghan people, Panetta said, "we are on track to meet the goals that our nations agreed to last year at the NATO summit in Chicago." He added that Afghan forces are set to take over lead security responsibility in the late spring, and full responsibility in 2014.

He pledged continued commitment to develop and sustain Afghan forces past 2014.

"The long-term commitment NATO has made is critical to fulfilling the mission that brave men and women from our two nations have fought and died to carry out," he said.

Other topics he discussed with Spanish leaders, Panetta said, include countering cyber threats and bolstering maritime security.

"Literally hundreds of thousands of cyber attacks are aimed at both the private sector ... and the governmental sector," Panetta said. "And for that reason, it is important that we work together to strengthen our capabilities in this wider area."

The United States already is partnering with Spain to meet the mission of safeguarding the seas, he noted. "The home-porting of four Aegis-equipped destroyers to Rota, which I announced on my first trip to Europe as secretary, is a key U.S. commitment of NATO," he said. "But more broadly, Rota is a critical gateway for naval and aerial operations into the Mediterranean and beyond."

The ship-based Aegis ballistic missile defense system incorporates computers, radar, and missiles to detect, track and destroy short- to intermediate-range missiles.

Naval Station Rota, on Spain's southern coast, is a Spanish base funded by the United States. "As our forces deploy there, we will look to increase our bilateral naval cooperation with Spain," Panetta said.

Moving ahead with the Aegis deployment to Rota while the United States and many other nations face significant fiscal pressure, the secretary said, "reflects our belief that the transatlantic alliance will remain critical for global security in the 21st century, and we must make investments in order to keep it strong for the future."

The world's nations still face a range of challenges, Panetta pointed out.

"That's reality. That's the world we live in," he said. "From terrorism to nuclear proliferation to the destabilizing behavior of regimes like Iran and North Korea, these are challenges that require us to be ever vigilant and ever ready and, above all, to be leaders in helping to forge a safer and more secure future for the 21st century."

Earlier today in Portugal, the secretary spoke to many of the same themes, and also noted Pentagon officials will alter the pace of the planned drawdown of U.S. forces at Lajes Field in the Azores.

Aguiar-Branco opened the joint news conference in the Portuguese capital. Speaking through a translator, he said the U.S. decision to cut manning at Lajes is a "situation that causes much concern to the Portuguese government."

"I explained to Mr. Leon Panetta the delicacy and importance to work together in order to mitigate the consequences of this situation and to lessen the impact on -- in the region of the Azores. ... This meeting was a very important stage in the work as allies and partners in our work to reinforce and strengthen our relationship."

Panetta responded that while budget pressures force a decrease in operations at Lajes Field, "we will do everything we can to minimize the impact and the hardship to that community and, indeed, we will use this as an opportunity to build an even stronger military-to-military relationship between the United States and Portugal."

The secretary said he made clear to Portuguese leaders that U.S. defense leaders will work with Portuguese officials and the local community to mitigate the impact of the decision.

The United States military is committed to Lajes Field, which has important airlift capabilities, he said.

"It will remain a vital part of our global forward posture. We will need to continue to make use of this important base," the secretary added.

Recognizing Portuguese concerns, Panetta said, the United States has delayed the transition of that reduction to October 2014. "We will maintain, in addition, a 24/7 fire and emergency services there, and we are committed to a 3-to-1 ratio of employees from the local community," he added. "For every one that the United States employs, we will employ three of the local community."

The United States also will explore opportunities to expand trade and business in the Azores, the secretary said, noting that U.S. European Command will host a delegation of business executives next month, which will include a visit to the Azores "that may provide opportunities for expanded economic development there."

Finally and most critically, Panetta said, the United States is committed to expanding the relationship between the U.S. and Portuguese militaries with a focus on the key security challenges of the future.

A joint team of Pentagon and Portuguese defense officials is working to develop "additional opportunities to improve our relationship, and to renew and to re-emphasize the strong relationship between the United States and Portugal," he added.

Panetta noted close partnership and cooperation among allied nations is even more important when defense budgets shrink.

“The defense strategy the United States released one year ago this month makes clear that in an era of fiscal constraint, it remains essential for us to invest in our historic alliances with countries like Portugal,” he said, “and for all of us to invest in alliance capabilities.”

Biographies:

[Leon E. Panetta](#)

Related Sites:

[Travels with Panetta](#)

[Panetta Press Round Table in Rome](#)

[Briefing by Defense Secretary Panetta en Route to Lisbon, Portugal](#)

[Panetta, Portuguese Defense Minister in Lisbon](#)

[State Department Fact Sheet on Portugal](#)

[State Department Fact Sheet on Spain](#)

[Panetta's Press Conference in Madrid](#)

[NATO](#)

[Lajes Field](#)

[Naval Station Rota](#)

4. Ambassador Rice at U.N. Security Council on Counterterrorism (01-15-2013)

Remarks by Ambassador Susan E. Rice, U.S. Permanent Representative to the United Nations, At a Security Council Briefing on Counterterrorism, January 15, 2013

Thank you, Madame President, and thank you for convening this very important meeting. Thank you, Mr. Secretary-General, as well for your briefing and your presence here today. I would like to express again our deepest condolences for the horrific attacks in Pakistan last week that killed more than 100 people. The United States stands with the Pakistani people in strongly condemning these senseless and inhumane acts, which, unfortunately, remind us that the scourge of terrorism remains with us all. And so, we very much appreciate Pakistan drawing the Council's attention back to this critical issue.

Reflecting on the past decade, the Security Council's sustained commitment to counterterrorism has been significant. We have continued to promote a holistic approach to combating terrorism, strengthening counterterrorism efforts at the national, regional and international levels.

Madame President, we cannot grow complacent. Even as core of Al-Qaida has experienced major setbacks, it survives and continues to threaten us all. Moreover, its affiliates and other violent extremist groups pose grave dangers. Al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula is a significant international threat. Al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb and Al-Shabaab continue to sow instability and exploit safe havens in Mali, the Sahel and the Horn of Africa, destabilizing societies and obstructing the delivery of vital humanitarian relief to millions in need. Elements of Boko Haram in Nigeria have launched multiple deadly attacks, including against the United Nations. And transnational terrorist groups remain active in North Africa, Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Syria and elsewhere. The resilience of terrorist networks underscores that long-term, diplomatic and economic initiatives, as well as international cooperation, are, as always, indispensable.

While we have made progress together, terrorist groups continue to adapt, evolving into criminal entrepreneurs, engaging in trafficking and other illicit activities to finance their operations. AQIM, for example, has increasingly used kidnapping for ransom to support its organization and finance terrorist attacks. Kidnapping for ransom is not only horrific for the victims and their families but represents a serious threat to international peace and security that will likely continue to pose a significant challenge in the years ahead. The international community must do much more to combat this scourge.

With the terrorist threat ever more diffuse, the need for a strategic and comprehensive approach to counterterrorism has never been greater. The United States recognizes that force, while necessary, is not nearly sufficient to counter the threat effectively over the long-term. We must also prioritize building state capacity, strengthening good governance and civilian institutions, promoting economic development and job creation, countering extremism, and reducing the appeal of violence and the pipeline of terrorist recruits so that Member States and their citizens are better equipped to tackle threats within their borders and regions.

At the same time, the United States has intensified our capacity-building assistance to help countries secure their borders, thwart attacks, prosecute terrorists and those who abet them, and neutralize extremism and its root causes. We have trained more than 9,800 law enforcement officials from over fifty countries in the last year alone. U.S. Legal Advisors are working with host country governments worldwide to build justice sector capacity to deal with terrorism. Our Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership has provided several countries in the Sahel and the Maghreb with training and support to tighten border security, promote economic assistance, disrupt terrorist networks, and prevent attacks. By assembling civilian, criminal justice, and military experts, this program pursues a comprehensive approach to counterterrorism. In addition, we established the Center for Strategic Counterterrorism Communications to confront and rebut Al-Qaida and extremist propaganda online.

Madame President, the United States values its partnership with the United Nations on counterterrorism, and our cooperation has produced results. For example, since effective prison management and good correctional practices can reduce the risk of radicalization, the United States has worked with the United Nations' Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute to develop the Rome Good Practices on the Rehabilitation and Reintegration of Violent Extremist Offenders. We look forward to close cooperation between the United Nations and the new Hedayah Center of Excellence on Countering Violent Extremism in Abu Dhabi that will assist experts to develop tools for countering extremist ideology and blunting the spread of radicalism.

Strengthening cooperation at the UN and other multilateral organizations and ensuring that the necessary architecture is in place to address terrorism in the 21st century remains central to our approach. The United Nations has worked actively to build consensus around a global counterterrorism strategy and deliver technical assistance to strengthen capacities worldwide. The UN has a critical role to play as a forum for advancing collective action against terrorism. The United States welcomes the Secretary-General's initiative to appoint a UN Counterterrorism Coordinator and unify the United Nations' counterterrorism architecture so that expertise and resources are deployed as efficiently as possible. We hope for even deeper cooperation between the United Nations and the Global Counterterrorism Forum in the coming year as the Forum promotes the implementation of its framework documents on rule of law, prisons, and preventing kidnapping for ransom. And we look forward to working in the Security Council and with Member States to further strengthen implementation of the Al-Qaida Sanctions Regime.

A key lesson of the past decade is the significant value that civil society can add to counterterrorism efforts. Victims and victims' associations, for example, have played important roles in preventing terrorism. We encourage all relevant United Nations actors to intensify engagement with and support for civil society on counterterrorism objectives and combating violent extremism.

No single country, no one organization, nor any particular tactic or tool alone can neutralize the threat of terrorism. Only a comprehensive approach bolstered by our shared determination, our continued cooperation, and expanding partnerships can ultimately end the threat of global terrorism.

Thank you, Madam President.

5. Obama, Afghanistan's Karzai Reach Key Agreements (01-11-2013)

By Phillip Kurata
Staff Writer

Washington — Afghan national forces will assume the lead for security across all of Afghanistan during the spring while troops from the United States and other NATO allies shift their mission to training, advising and assisting Afghan forces, according to a joint statement by President Obama and Afghan President Hamid Karzai after their meeting in Washington January 11.

The United States will be a long-term partner for “a strong and sovereign Afghanistan,” Obama said at a press conference with Karzai following their summit at the White House. “And by the end of next year — 2014 — the transition will be complete. Afghans will have full responsibility for their country, and this war will come to a responsible end.”

“I’m very happy to hear from the president ... that the international forces — the American forces will be no longer present in Afghan villages, that the task will be that of the Afghan forces to provide for the Afghan people in security and protection,” Karzai said.

The joint statement said providing additional equipment and training for the Afghan forces will be a key priority in the security transition.

Obama and Karzai said they eliminated obstacles that were blocking negotiations for a bilateral security agreement to allow the United States to keep a residual force in Afghanistan after 2014. Obama insisted that an agreement contain legal immunity for U.S. forces from Afghan law. Karzai said he will “go to the Afghan people and argue for immunity for U.S. troops in Afghanistan in a way that Afghan sovereignty will not be compromised.”

The joint statement said the two presidents committed to placing Afghan detainees under the “sovereignty and control of Afghanistan, while ensuring that dangerous fighters remain off the battlefield.” The document also indicated that detainees will be treated humanely and lawfully.

ECONOMIC TRANSITION

Obama and Karzai said the United States will support Afghanistan’s economic strategy that focuses on developing human capital to lead Afghanistan’s institutions and fostering growth based on the private sector, entrepreneurs and Afghanistan’s natural wealth.

On the issue of corruption, Karzai said his government has made progress in reducing it but more needs to be done.

“I have been very clear and explicit,” Karzai said. “Corruption that is foreign in origin but occurring in Afghanistan” cannot be brought under control “unless there is cooperation between us and our international partners.”

According the statement, at least 50 percent of U.S. development assistance will be channeled through the national budget of the Afghan government.

ELECTIONS IN 2014

Karzai vowed that Afghanistan’s presidential and provincial council elections on April 5, 2014, will be free, fair and inclusive. Karzai is nearing the end of his second term and is constitutionally barred from running again. “Certainly, I would be a retired president, and very happily, a retired president,” Karzai said.

PEACE AND RECONCILIATION

Obama and Karzai said security gains must be matched by political progress, and they committed to supporting a reconciliation process between the Afghan government and the Taliban. They were in agreement on the Taliban opening an office in Qatar where direct talks would take place between the Afghan government and the Taliban with support from regional countries, including Pakistan.

Obama said the Taliban must end violence, break ties with al-Qaida and accept Afghanistan’s Constitution.

Obama said political and diplomatic work lies ahead for Afghanistan and Pakistan, and the United States will facilitate cooperation between the two sovereign countries. He added that Pakistan is starting to see the need for cooperation with Afghanistan in the interest of peace and stability in the region.

Karzai said he returns to Afghanistan bearing “news of Afghanistan standing shoulder to shoulder with America as a sovereign, independent country but in cooperation and partnership.”

[Pentagon Officials Welcome Afghan President for Talks](#)
[President Obama on Ending the War in Afghanistan](#)
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6. Panetta: Fiscal Crisis Poses Biggest Immediate Threat to DOD (01-10-2013)

By Karen Parrish
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WASHINGTON, Jan. 10, 2013 – The “perfect storm of budget uncertainty” howling around his department is the biggest immediate threat facing the U.S. military, Defense Secretary Leon E. Panetta told reporters here today.

Panetta and Army Gen. Martin E. Dempsey, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, stressed during a regular Pentagon press conference that unless Congress acts, the nation's military readiness will be compromised.

The United States has a number of adversaries around the world, Panetta said, "but the most immediate threat to our ability to achieve our mission is fiscal uncertainty: not knowing what our budget will be; not knowing if our budget will be drastically cut; and not knowing whether the strategy that we put in place can survive."

Panetta emphasized that DOD "is doing its part" by implementing over the next decade the \$487 billion spending reduction set by Congress. "We designed a strategy; we know what the elements of that strategy are; we built a budget based on that, and we achieved our savings by virtue of that strategy," he said.

But the additional half-trillion-dollar "meat-axe cuts" sequester would trigger still loom "less than 50 days away," the secretary noted.

"While we appreciate ... that both parties came together to delay sequester, the unfortunate thing is sequester itself, and the sequester threat, was not removed," Panetta said. "And the prospect ... is undermining our ability to responsibly manage this department."

Two other fiscal crises are meanwhile converging on the nation's forces, he added:

- Because Congress didn't approve an appropriations act for fiscal 2013, DOD has been operating under a continuing resolution and will do so at least through March 27. The continuing resolution funds operations at fiscal 2012 levels, instead of the higher proposed fiscal 2013 levels Pentagon officials had anticipated.
- The debt-ceiling crisis, Panetta said, "could create even further turmoil that could impact on our budget and our economy."

Looking at all three factors, the secretary said simply, "We have no idea what the hell is going to happen." But DOD leaders do know that the worst-case scenario would mean "serious harm" to military readiness, he said.

Panetta noted defense strategy places the highest priority on operations and maintenance funding as the key to a ready force. He described the triple threat facing those funds:

- If Congress fails to pass an appropriations bill for fiscal 2013 and instead extends the continuing resolution through the fiscal year, "overall operating accounts would decrease by about 5 percent ... about \$11 billion that would come out of operations and maintenance funds."
- If sequester occurs, "We would have to cut, in this fiscal year, another 9 percent, almost \$18 billion from ... these operating accounts as well."
- To protect funding for the war in Afghanistan from required cuts, "We would again have to cut another 5 percent, another \$11 billion, from readiness money available in the active-duty base budget, and more for the Army and the Marine Corps."

Panetta summed up: "We're looking at a 19 to 20 percent reduction in the base budget operating dollars for active units, including a cut of what looks like almost 30 percent for the Army."

The secretary said practical results of these cuts would be less training for units not imminently deploying to Afghanistan; less shipboard training for all but the highest priority missions; less pilot training and fewer flight hours; curtailed ship maintenance and disruption to research and weapons modernization programs.

Civilian employees would also take a hit, he said: unpaid layoffs, which the government calls furloughs, would put civilian employees temporarily out of work. This “would further harm our readiness, and create hardship on them and their families,” Panetta noted.

A plan is in place to implement such layoffs if sequester happens, the secretary said. “This action is strictly precautionary,” he said. “I want to make that clear: It's precautionary. But I have an obligation to ... let Congress know that we may have to do that, and I very much hope that we will not have to furlough anyone. But we've got to be prepared to do that if we face this situation.”

Panetta said the net result of sequester under a continuing resolution would be “what I said we should not do with the defense budget, which is to hollow out the defense force of this nation.” Rather than let that happen, Panetta added, DOD leaders have decided to take steps to minimize the damage that would follow Congressional inaction.

“We still have an obligation to protect this country,” the secretary said. “So for that reason, I've asked the military services and the other components to immediately begin implementing prudent measures that will help mitigate our budget risk.”

Panetta said he has directed any actions taken “must be reversible to the extent feasible and must minimize harmful effects on readiness.”

But, he added, “We really have no choice but to prepare for the worst.” First steps to containing budget risk will include cutting back on facility maintenance, freezing civilian hiring and delaying some contract awards, the secretary said.

Panetta has also directed the services to develop detailed plans for how they will implement sequester-triggered cuts, if required, he said, “because there will be so little time to respond in the current fiscal year. I mean, we're almost halfway through the fiscal year.”

The secretary said the intensive planning effort now under way will ensure the military is prepared to accomplish its core missions.

“I want to emphasize, however, that ... no amount of planning that we do can fully offset the harm that would result from sequestration, if that happens,” he added.

Panetta said U.S. service members are working and fighting, and some are dying, every day.

“Those of us in Washington need to have the same courage as they do to do the right thing and try to protect the security of this country,” he added. “We must ensure we have the resources we need to defend the nation and meet our commitments to our troops, to our civilian employees, and to their families, after more than a decade of war.”

Congress must pass a balanced deficit reduction plan, de-trigger sequester, and pass the appropriations bills for fiscal 2013, he said.

"I'm committed to do whatever I can in the time I have remaining in office to try to work with the Congress to ... resolve these issues," Panetta said. "We have a vital mission to perform, one that the American people expect and that they are entitled to, which is to protect their safety and to protect our national security. Congress must be a partner in that mission. I'd love to be able to do this alone, but I can't."

Dempsey offered his view of what wreckage the fiscal "storm" would leave behind.

"As I've said before, sequestration is a self-inflicted wound on national security," the chairman said. "It's an irresponsible way to manage our nation's defense. It cuts blindly, and it cuts bluntly. It compounds risk, and it ... compromises readiness. In fact, readiness is what's now in jeopardy. We're on the brink of creating a hollow force, the very thing we said we must avoid."

Dempsey noted sequestration may now "hit" while the department, under a continuing resolution, is also implementing "the deep cuts already made in the Budget Control Act" and fighting a war in Afghanistan.

"Any one of these would be a serious challenge on its own," Dempsey said. "Together, they set the conditions for readiness to pass a tipping point as early as March."

DOD won't shortchange those in combat, and will resource those who are next to deploy while still caring for wounded warriors and their families, the chairman said.

"But for the rest of the force, operations, maintenance and training will be gutted," Dempsey said. "We'll ground aircraft, return ships to port, and sharply curtail training across the force. ... We may be forced to furlough civilians at the expense of maintenance and even health care. We'll be unable to reset the force following a decade of war."

Military readiness will begin to erode immediately, Dempsey said, telling reporters, "Within months, we'll be less prepared. Within a year, we'll be unprepared."

The crisis "can and must be avoided, the sooner, the better," the chairman said.

"We need budget certainty; we need time to absorb the budget reductions; we need the flexibility to manage those reductions across the entire budget," he said. "We have none of these things right now. And without them, we have no choice but to steel ourselves for the consequences."

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[Leon E. Panetta](#)

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